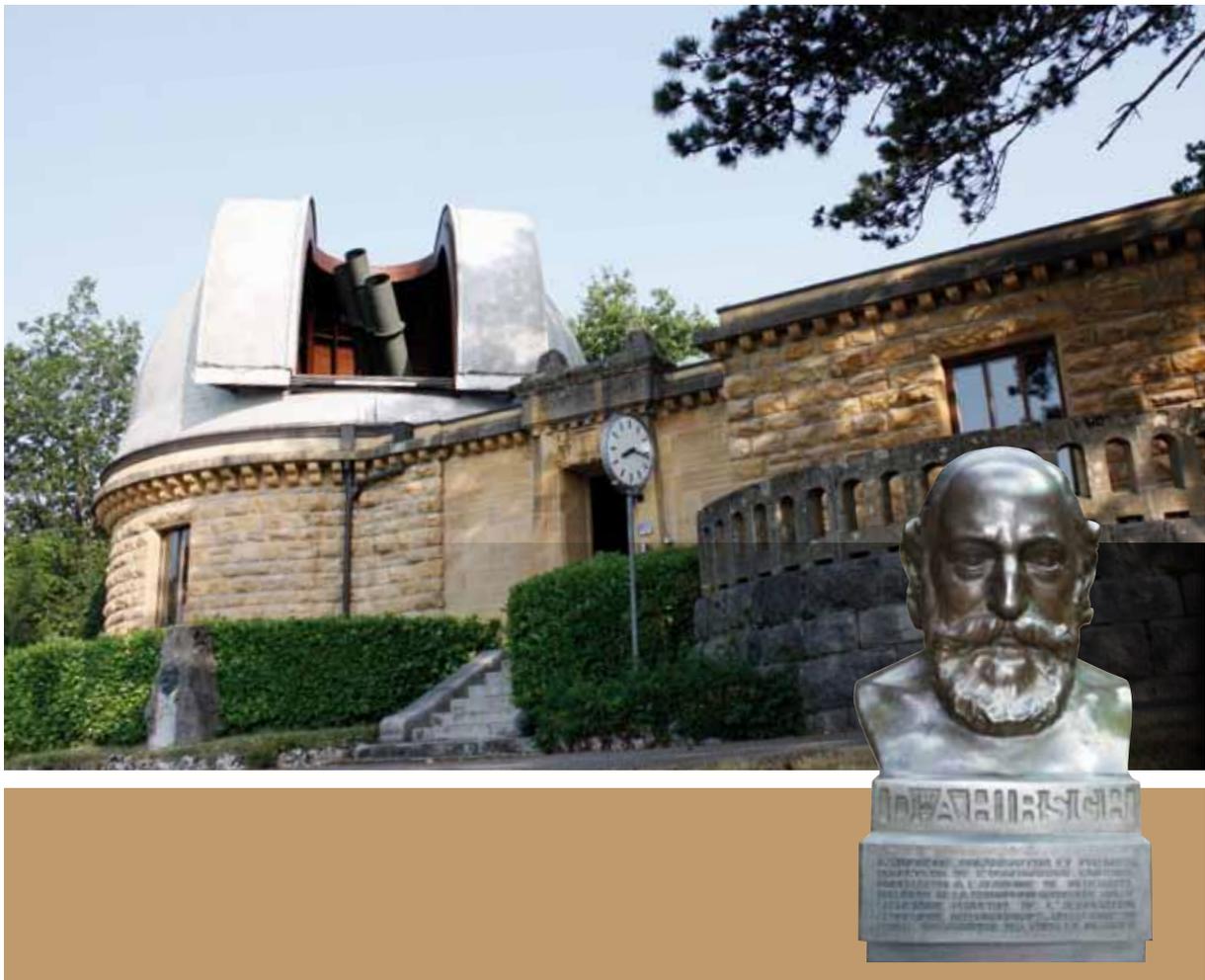


HKB - MA Design, Research  
**Neuchâtel Observatory Museum  
Exhibiting Time and its Measures**

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Bust of Dr. Adolphe Hirsch and Hirsch Pavillion

# Abstract

In 1857 the brand new Republic and Canton of Neuchâtel decided to equip the region with an astronomical observatory in order to provide the local watchmaking industry with the correct time.

The Observatory, founded in 1858, was also asked to organize observatory chronometer trials, whose results would prove the value and reliability of Neuchâtel watches and clocks to international customers.

The Neuchâtel Observatory's reputation for the precise measuring of time improved in time, and the Observatory became a world-wide reference. For more than a century it was responsible for determining and communicating time through out Switzerland. Just like Greenwich in the UK!

For various political and economical reasons, the institution was dissolved in 2007 and integrated into the University of Neuchâtel and the Swiss Center for Electronics and Microtechnology (CSEM), which now occupies a large part of the Observatory site. Even today, the name of the Neuchâtel Observatory is a synonymous for precise time measurement.

The aim of my master's project is to develop an exhibition concept which traces the history of the Neuchâtel Observatory. Time and its measurement are the core concepts of my project. I will also focus my approach on the epoch when Neuchâtel was a world-wide reference for chronometry.

Themes to be developed:

- the history of the Observatory within the industrialization context and at the period of first world's fair
- the transmission/communication of time
- chronometric competitions for watchmakers
- time and its measure/measurement
- functions of the various scientific instruments used on the site of the Observatory

## The key dates of the Observatory

### 1857 / 1858

The State of Neuchâtel confirms the construction and the plans of an observatory.

The german Adolphe Hirsch is the founder and the first director at the age of 28

### 1859 / 1860

Construction of the first buildings

### 1860

Hourly signal sent every day by telegraphic line

### 1880

The time is precise to two hundredth of a second

### 1901

Death of Dr Hirsch. He gives his fortune to the State of Neuchâtel to build the Hirsch Pavilion.

Dr Arndt is the second director.

### 1912

Opening of the Hirsch Pavilion

### 1938

The Observatory is on the list of the 10 best observatories in the world

### 1957

The beginning of the speaking clock and distribution of time by radio wave

### 1961

The time of the Observatory becomes the standard time in Switzerland

### 1977

It is the end of the definition of the international time by the Observatory. The United States, Canada and Germany are the references

### 2007

End of the activities of the Observatory



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- 1. Hirsch Pavilion (built in 1912)
- 2. Zeiss telescope from 1910
- 3. Quervain-Piccard seismograph from 1926
- 4. Control apparatus
- 5. Astronomic pendulum